patent laws of the country concerned. Earlier a patent granted in the United States of America on the use of turmeric in wound healing was successfully challenged and was also cancelled by the Patent Office of the country concerned. Similarly, a patent on the fungicidal property of neem, granted in Europe, was successfully challenged. The claims of the patent on Basmati Ricelines and grains granted in the United States of America which had the potential of affecting India's commercial interest were also challenged. The said claims were subsequently cancelled by the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the title of the patent was also amended.

Ban on import of Indian drugs by Pakistan

1760. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan has recently banned import of Indian made bulk drugs on the ground that the local drug industry has commenced production of drugs hitherto imported from India;

(b) whether Pakistan permits import of bulk drugs from China, Thailand and Korea even for drugs that are produced locally;

(c) whether India is the only country that has been singled out by Pakistan; and

(d) whether India would take up the matter with its Pakistani counterparts for revoking the ban?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Pakistan has reportedly changed its policy about five years ago for imports of drugs from India to protect local Bulk Drug Industry. Bulk drugs are allowed to be imported from India subject to a customs duty of 25% in order to give protection to the local production in Pakistan.

(b) Yes, Sir. Pakistan permits import of bulk drugs from China, Thailand and Korea even for drugs that are produced locally.

(c) and (d) A Committee of Experts has been set up to discuss trade related issues between the two countries with a view to sorting these out for mutual benefit.